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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A Study in Fighting the Good Fight

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CONTENTS

1

Recommended Resources & Introduction: Spiritual Warfare

7

Part 1: Battleground

13

Part 2: Armies

19

Part 3: Weapons

25

Part 4: Cost

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Screwtape Letters

How a Senior Devil Instructs a Junior Devil in the Art of Temptations

By: C.S. Lewis | Time Inc ©1961

The Stronghold of God

Finding God's Place of Immunity from Attacks of the Enemy

By: Francis Frangipane | Charisma House ©2008

The Bait of Satan

Living Free from the Deadly Trap of Offense

By: John Bevere | Charisma House ©2004

Truly Free

Breaking the Snares that So Easily Entangle

By: Robert Morris | Thomas Nelson ©2015

Idol Lies

Facing the Truth About Our Deepest Desires

By: Dee Brestin | Worthy Publishing ©2012

// SPIRITUAL WARFARE

As Christians, we are equipped with spiritual weapons. These weapons are designed to defeat our spiritual enemy, the devil, and his servants. Our enemy wages a war for our heart on the battlefield of our mind. Although already disarmed and defeated by Christ, we may empower the enemy through our thoughts, actions, and beliefs. This study will explore four key truths regarding our spiritual warfare: the battlefield, the armies, the weapons, and the cost.

BATTLEGROUND

We have an enemy. His plan is to capture our heart. This fight for our heart takes place on the battlefield of our mind. Therefore, his attacks are often attacks against our identity in our thoughts and beliefs. To conquer our enemy, we must be aware of these tactics and choose to fight against them.

THE BATTLE'S LOCATION

Ephesians 6:10-12; Romans 7:23; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; James 4:1; 1 Peter 2:11

We live in a perpetual state of war fought on the battlefield of our mind. Our heart, the culminating outflow of who we are, is likened to a precious stream that is being fought over.¹ Our mind — thoughts, motives, and intellect — is where the battle for our heart is being fought. If the battlefield is captured or controlled by the enemy, then our hearts are surrendered to him. Jesus uses the analogy of a tree. Whatever we choose to feed a tree determine the health of our heart, which affects our actions and words.² We capture and kill (“destroy” and “punish”) any thought (justification, excuse, motivation, or belief) about God, others, and ourselves that does not agree with God. This means that every thought is killed that does not take into consideration God’s character, who Jesus is, or what he has accomplished. We kill thoughts by replacing them with the truth.³ Simply not believing a lie does not kill it. We must exchange the lie with the truth. This voids any possibility of the lie coming back to life.⁴ We kill rebellious lies by replacing them with the truth of the Gospel — who Jesus is and what he has accomplished on our behalf.⁵

OUR ENEMY

1 Peter 5:8; John 8:44; 10:10; Ephesians 6:12

Our enemy is the devil and his servants. They are finite, created spirits with limitations. The enemy cannot be always in all places. While the enemy can speak into our minds, they cannot read or know our thoughts. They can, however, read and observe our body language, habits, emotions, and unresolved past — using them against us.⁶ They are not all powerful as God is. Christ has fully defeated and disarmed the enemy. The only power they have is in their ability through our unwillingness to trust the Holy Spirit.⁷

The enemy is not always attacking. He waits for opportune times, allowing for circumstances or people to come against us. He may also allow us to self-destruct through our own destructive habits or rebellion and sin.⁸

¹ See Proverbs 4:23

² See Matthew 6:15-20; 12:33-35; Luke 6:43-45

³ See Philippians 4:8

⁴ See Romans 1:18-25

⁵ The Gospel can be summed up in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and Galatians 5:1. Christ has set us free from the penalty and power of sin. The Father extended His forgiveness to us through Jesus. We are reconciled when we repent.

⁶ See Ephesians 4:26-27; James 3:14-15; 4:1-4

⁷ See Colossians 2:6-15; Ephesians 4:27; John 8:44; 1 John 4:1-6

⁸ See Luke 4:13; Matthew 26:16; Luke 17:1-2; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:27; James 1:14-15

THE ENEMY'S ATTACK

Ephesians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:3; 1 Peter 5:8

Because the enemy has been disarmed, his only offensive weapon is his voice — subtle deceptions, half-truths, and manipulations. The enemy's voice, however, when given into, allows him the opportunity to attack. The following are examples of how the enemy attacks us once we've given into his voice:

1. Culture

Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 2:14-17

One's **culture** is the ideas, behaviors, attitudes, and traditions of one's family, local community, and country. The government, education, media, arts, and entertainment of one's country greatly influences the values, customs, and traditions of their culture.

2. Idolatry

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

An **idol** is anything we possess, do, or belong to that brings us security, comfort, or identity outside of trusting Jesus. In Addition to these, an idol can be anything we use to escape life or difficult circumstances and relationships.⁹ Idols are the things or people we need permission from before we trust Jesus. For example, before generously giving, we need to “get permission” from our savings account by making sure we have enough in our “emergency fund” to cover it. Rather, maybe we need to sacrifice an expense and trust God to provide amidst what He is asking us to generously give.

3. Relationships

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Family, spouses, co-workers, or people in general may be used to attack our minds through intentional or unintentional offenses.

4. Partnership

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Collaboration with an unbeliever toward a specific goal will bring attacks from the enemy. These partnerships include (but are not limited to) dating, marriage, business, and intimate friendships.

⁹ See 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

5. Abstinence Teachings

1 Timothy 4:1-5 (Acts 10:1-11:18)

The enemy desires to confuse and complicate the Gospel. He may do this through “Christian” teachings that require one to prove their righteousness by the denial of good, God-given things (e.g., food, marriage, drinking, etc.).

6. Anger & Bitterness

Ephesians 4:25-32

Unresolved conflicts and offenses are always a prime opportunity the enemy will use to attack.

7. Marital Celibacy

1 Corinthians 7:5

Sex within marriage between a man and a woman serves multiple purposes: joy, procreation, relational intimacy, cultivate vulnerability, builds trust, protect against unfaithfulness, and comfort.¹⁰ Sex, when abstained for a long period of time, breaks down those purposes. This creates opportunity for the enemy to distract and attack.

8. Heresy

1 Timothy 4:1-5; Galatians 5:1-12

Any teaching or “divine revelation” that rejects, adds to, or changes who Jesus is or what he accomplished is from the enemy. One primary example is works or shame-based salvation.

9. Busybody

1 Timothy 5:9-16

Laziness, gossip, slander, division, bitterness, eavesdropping, or meddling are all ways the enemy can side-track us from our purpose. Participating in these will enable the enemy to fill our mind with deception and lies.

10. Judging & Condemning

John 5:18-21; Exodus 20:16; Revelation 12:10; 2 Corinthians 7:10

We allow the enemy to gain ground in our mind when we choose to accuse, lie, believe, or assume the worst about others. Judging the thoughts, motives, and intentions of people rejects the grace and hope that the Holy Spirit desires to bring to them through you. We

¹⁰ Mark Driscoll. *Religion Saves: And Nine Other Misconceptions*. (Crossway Books, 2009), pp. 27.

reject what Jesus has done for us if we dwell (judge and condemn ourselves) on our own sin through regret, guilt, or shame.

11. Physical or Mental Torment

Acts 5:1; Matthew 9:32; 12:12; Mark 1:32; James 3:13-16 (1:6-8; 4:8)

The enemy loves to afflict and oppress us. He may use sickness, fatigue, or confusion to bring discouragement, disappointment, and frustration. While the enemy may use these as a weapon, not all physical sickness is a result of demonic involvement.

12. Physical Harm

Genesis 1:26-27 (James 3:9); Matthew 17:14-18; 27:3-5 (Luke 22:3); Mark 5:1-6; John 8:44; Acts 19:11-16

Self-injury, cutting, murder, suicide, or any form of purposeful mutilation that defaces the image of God is an attack of the enemy. He desires to kill and destroy us because we reflect God.

13. False Miracles

Acts 8:9-24; 16:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-10

The enemy is always trying to distract, obscure, or sensationalize God's work. In doing this, the enemy replaces the worship of Jesus with the worship of whatever is happening. Along with this, the enemy will empower people with abilities to do supernatural work that distracts and enslaves those doing the works and those observing.

CONCLUSION

We have an enemy. However, he is not all-powerful. Jesus defeated the enemy when he died on the cross over two millennia ago. The power the enemy uses against us is only given to him when we choose not to acknowledge, thank, and seek God. Our enemy desires to steal our hope, joy, and peace. He seeks to kill us physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Ultimately, the enemy of our souls desires to destroy every good thing that God has planned and designed for us.¹¹

¹¹ See John 10:10

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- In what areas of your life (i.e., relationships, finances, circumstances, abilities, experiences, etc.) do you not acknowledge, thank, or seek God?
- What is the predominant accusation or negative thought that is continually on your mind?
- How far back do you remember that thought being in your mind?
- What circumstances or person was involved in that earliest memory?
- Fill out The Freedom Booklet for the circumstance or person from the last question.

ARMIES

Two armies wage war in our mind for our heart. Jesus, with the Kingdom of Light, and Satan, with the kingdom of darkness, control these armies. We conquer the enemy in our minds by acknowledging, thanking, and seeking the Holy Spirit in every moment (relationship and circumstance) of life.

OUR COMMANDING OFFICER

Ephesians 1:3-14; 6:10; John 14:1-15:17; Philippians 2:9-11

Jesus is our Commanding Officer. We begin life connected to him. Early in our growing up years, however, we may choose to ignore, reject, and rebel against him. Reconciliation with our Heavenly Father happens the moment we trust Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. His life reveals our design and destiny. His death frees us from the penalty of sin. His resurrection makes us victorious over the power of sin.¹ It is Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who has defeated the enemy and reveals our part in defeating the enemy.² The same Spirit empowers us to overcome the enemy's plan for our life — one of fear, death, and destruction.³

LIFESTYLE OF TRUST

John 15:1-11

We demonstrate our trust in Jesus by living out of what he has commanded us to do:

1. Love

Mark 12:29-31; John 15:12-17; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-12; Matthew 5:43-48

Love is the denial of ourselves — our rights, desires, beliefs, and expectations — for the benefit of others. It prefers others' needs and desires above our own. The extent to which we live empowered by the Holy Spirit is tested and revealed by the extent to which we love others, especially our enemies. Our **enemies**, in this context, are any person who has intentionally or unintentionally emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually, sexually, or psychologically hurt, judged, manipulated, offended, used, or coerced us.

Love is a choice based on our understanding of how the Father loves us. It cooperates with Jesus' desire to love others. Love is not an emotion led by positive circumstances or others' reciprocation. We love God by acknowledging, thanking, and seeking Him in all circumstances and relationships. Our love of Him (and how we believe He loves us) is revealed in how we love others.

¹ See 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 12:10-11

² See Colossians 1:24; Revelation 12:10-11

³ See Galatians 2:20-21; Colossians 1:15-23

2. Forgiveness

Mark 12:29-31; 18:25; Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35

Forgiveness *is the canceling of any past or current actions or responses of a person.* It releases control of how we think a person should act or behave. Forgiveness allows the Holy Spirit to repair or redeem any negative consequences we may have. These consequences include any negative physical, emotional, or relational effects we are suffering. We must also concede that although we may have dealt with past issues, future consequences may still happen.

Forgiveness is an act of the will and a process of the heart to identify, acknowledge, and release offenses. The truest test of our love is releasing an offender from both the offense and its affects to God and receiving from Him His perspective and truth about the situation. This test requires nothing from the offender (i.e., them to do something or stop doing something).

When faced with the negative effects of others' sin on us, we either choose to negate the need for forgiveness (out of a sense of loyalty or false definition of love) or wrongly define forgiveness and remove our need to sacrificially love. Refusing, negating, or wrongly defining forgiveness produces negative effects in addition to what we may already be suffering from because of the original offense.

3. Repentance

1 Corinthians 7:10-11; Luke 13:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Repentance *is the act of building new healthy habits and behaviors that are revealed over time* — it is the change in our thinking that is proven over time through our behaviors. It reveals that we've allowed the Holy Spirit to convince us of a new way of thinking and behaving. It is this change that renews, strengthens, and guards our minds over time. Repentance is not simply stopping a thought and behavior. It is actively choosing to pursue a new thought and behavior.

The idea that we must only repent when a rule is broken is erroneous. True repentance is more concerned with reconciled relationships than it is with moralistic living. We repent not only when we have broken a rule, but more importantly, when we have broken relationship through sins or unintentional failures and mistakes. That is, whenever a hurt or offense has been brought to our attention through the Holy Spirit. Repentance willingly exposes and confesses sin with the goal of reconciliation and restoration of a

relationship. It is rooted in Godly sorrow that produces fruit in-line with the Holy Spirit. Repentance will always be life-giving, hope-filled, and result in our joy.

OUR ENEMY

1 Peter 5:6-11; Ephesians 6:10-12; John 10:10; Colossians 2:15

Our flesh, people and circumstances are not our enemy. However, they can be used, lied about, and manipulated by the enemy for our destruction. He then is able to speak lies, manipulate, and deceive us through our flesh, people, and circumstances. This is why we must capture every thought we have and run it through the filter of who Jesus is, what he has accomplished on our behalf, and trust what Jesus revealed to us about our identity and destiny. If a thought is not true, respectable, right, pure, lovely, joy-filled, good, or produces thankfulness in our mind then it must be punished.

We punish (kill) these negative Christ-less thoughts by intentionally releasing them to Jesus and asking Jesus to give us a replacing word, thought, or picture (his perspective or prophetic word).⁴ While specific circumstances or people may be the object of our desire, disappointment, frustration, or discouragement, it is the whispered lie of the enemy in our thoughts that is the real attack.

Suffering is a neutral circumstance that the enemy schemes for our destruction while the Holy Spirit schemes for our benefit. It is our response to (and focus during) suffering that reveals to whom we are loyal — the enemy or to the Holy Spirit.⁵

There are three primary ways that we may experience suffering:

1. Tests

Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 3:8; 11:17; James 1:3-8

Tests are used to reveal the capacity of our faith in the Heavenly Father. They reveal what we believe about God and His character. Failing a test will often require us to expand our knowledge of Him through reading Scripture and intentionally listening for the Holy Spirit's voice.

⁴ See 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; John 8:31; Philippians 4:8

⁵ See Romans 8:28; 5:3-5; James 1:2-8

2. Trials

1 Corinthians 3:12-15; James 1:12-15; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13

Trials are often used to reveal the quality of our faith. They reveal the motivation of our mindsets — the extent to which our behaviors reflect our faith in God's goodness and provision. Failing a trial will often require us to intentionally seek the Holy Spirit for new actions and mindsets that often can only come through releasing control and gratitude amidst difficult circumstances.

3. Temptations

Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:6-14

Temptations reveal our commitment to our dependence in the Holy Spirit. They also reveal areas in our beliefs and behaviors that we have not released or given access to the Holy Spirit. Failure with a temptation, because of habitually inclining our desires toward the object of our temptation, will often require a greater future reliance upon God's provision and a dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

The enemy's plan is to steal, kill, and destroy our peace of mind, joy, and relationships (especially with our Heavenly Dad). The enemy will say anything and employ whatever means necessary to capture the allegiance of our heart. He will lie about our circumstances — health, finances, education, occupation, etc. — to make us doubt the Father's goodness and provision. He lies to people (and to us about people) — family, friends, coworkers, strangers, etc. — to wound and offend us. This leads us down the path of bitterness and anger rather than love and forgiveness. The enemy's desire is that we waste our suffering — failing the tests, trials, and temptations that we encounter. He does this by drawing our attention to why or from where suffering is coming rather than what the Holy Spirit desires to strengthen or produce through it.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- In what circumstance or relationship is it most difficult for you to acknowledge and thank God for His goodness and provision? Why?
- With who is it most difficult for you to sacrificially pursue relationship or provisionally bless them? Why?
- Who is it difficult for you to release your expectations you have of them?
- What person or circumstance has the enemy often tried to twist into an attack against you? What might the Holy Spirit be trying to develop or empower in you through this person or circumstance?

WEAPONS

Our Commanding Officer, Jesus, has given us weapons to defeat the enemy. Living empowered by the Holy Spirit will give us confidence to wield these weapons with grace, wisdom, and skill. These spiritual weapons defeat the enemy and his servants along with their works and affects in our life.

OUR WEAPONS

Galatians 5:19-24

While we fight a spiritual battle in our mind, our lives are practically lived out by our reactions and responses to circumstances and relationships. A response is a premeditated thought or action toward negative, uncomfortable, or uncontrollable people and circumstances. It is the first step in creating habitual reactions.

A self-focused, self-reliant, self-gratifying response will only perpetuate our discomfort, disappointment, frustration, or discouragement. These repeated life-taking responses over time will produce destructive habitual reactions that appear to be natural or an outflow of our identity. In reality, they are only a by-product of a distorted or devalued perception of our God-given identity.

A Spirit-led response, while it may not change the circumstance or relationship, will transform our outlook and mindset. These repeated life-giving responses over time will produce creative, beneficial habitual reactions that are in-line with our God-given design and identity. The ultimate by-product of Spirit-led responses will be peace of mind, joy amidst difficulty, and a patient endurance through suffering.

God has given us specific weapons and armor to defeat the enemy's schemes in our life. Paul, in Ephesians chapter six, uses a Roman soldier's armor as a reference for his Ephesian audience. A soldier's armor served a two-fold purpose: armor protected against attacks from the enemy as well as identified rank within the army.

1. Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14; Isaiah 11:5

A soldier's thick belt protected both the lower organs along with the groin and reproductive organs.

Our legacy is anything we pass on to and model to those around us. Living with a legacy mindset that is rooted in truth means that our behavior matches our words and is in-line with the reality of the Kingdom of God, our God-given identity, and our Spirit-empowered destiny. We can either leave behind a legacy of faith, hope, and love or distrust, disappointment, and fear.

2. Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:24; Isaiah 59:17

A soldier's breastplate protected the vital organs especially his heart.

Scripture reveals that our identity is rooted in the image and likeness of God. It is intrinsic — having unchanging value and worth. Our heart is the core of who we are — from it emanates our thoughts behaviors. Who we believe we are will determine what we do. The enemy cannot change God's character or our God-given identity. However, he can get us to believe a lie about God and about our God-given identity. Therefore, to protect our heart from becoming hardened (believing a distorted or devalued perception of our identity) we must believe, first, that God is good, and second, that He is the source of our identity. These mindsets will produce right behavior in our relationships (righteousness). These Spirit-empowered behaviors will affirm our identity and guard against the lies and accusations of the enemy.

3. Shoes of Readiness

Ephesians 6:15; Isaiah 52:7

The feet and leg protection of a soldier included both sandals and shin guards. This enabled the soldier to travel and fight nearly anywhere his commanding officer sent him.

With our foundation in the reality that Jesus has freed us from the penalty and power of sin (the Gospel), our purpose is to share our story of freedom and victory with others. Sharing our story invites them to experience the same freedom and victory we have. Evangelism is more than just talking about Jesus. It is telling our personal vulnerable story of what Jesus has specifically freed us from and given us victory over.¹

4. Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16

The most common shield a soldier would carry into the battlefield was called the Scutum. This shield was about 3½ feet (1.06 meters) high by 2 feet (.06 meters) wide. Slightly curved, this shield was able to be held in one hand while large enough for a soldier to kneel behind. Not only was the shield used for individual protection, it was also used in conjunction with other soldiers and their shields.

¹ See Revelation 12:11; John 4:39; Luke 8:39

Together, it would protect a regimen of soldiers who stood side-by-side to one another.

Our faith — complete dependence and implicit trust in the Holy Spirit — is the single greatest defensive tool we possess against the enemy's lies. When attacked as individuals, we can withstand. However, we are also encouraged to have faith for (and use the faith of) other believers. We are to strengthen one another. Living by faith in every moment makes the difference between a discouraged, disappointed, and frustrated soldier of Jesus or a victorious conquering saint.

5. Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17; Isaiah 59:17

A soldier's helmet protected his head from fatal attacks. It was uniquely balanced for comfort, flexibility, and utility.

Our salvation is not based upon our experience, knowledge, wisdom, abilities, or efforts. Nor is it contingent upon what we've willingly participated in or what has been done to us without our consent. We must protect and guard our mind against rationalizing, justifying, and believing our salvation is based upon anything other than what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf. We are saved and continue to find salvation when we simply receive his forgiveness and grace.

6. Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17; Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12

The two-edged sword was a Roman Soldier's primary offensive weapon. Training nearly every day of his enlistment, a soldier became well accustomed to his sword — its weight, movement, and balance — developing the quickest technique to take down his enemy. While training consisted of individual practice, Roman soldiers fought almost exclusively in a regimen of soldiers. Using the shield for protection and momentum, the regimen would knock their enemy off balance then stab them with their swords. The army would continue advancing in this manner, defeating their enemy as one collective unit.

Our sword, God's word (primarily the Spirit but also the Scriptures), is the single most important offensive weapon we have to defeat the enemy in our life and the lives of those around us. It is capable of cutting to the core of our heart — killing the idols we have built up.

We must be attuned to the Holy Spirit's voice as well as meditating in the Scriptures daily to live encouraged, comforted, and challenged. Affectively wielding the Sword of the Spirit (the Spirit and the Scriptures) requires both our personal faith and the faith of the Church body.

7. **Communication with Our Commander**

Ephesians 6:18-19

Prayer is warfare. It is engaging the enemy with the power of the living God. Prayer affirms our reliance upon the Holy Spirit while demonstrating our trust in Him. Three primary methods of prayer can be implemented in our battle against the enemy:

- a. **Personal Prayer:** This is simply communication with the Father. We acknowledge, seek, and thank Him for His goodness and provision in our personal lives.
- b. **Corporate Prayer:** This is communication with the Father where one or more believers are in agreement.
- c. **Intercessory Prayer:** This can be personal or corporate communication with the Father on behalf of other believers. All believers should, at the very least, pray specifically for the pastors and leaders under which you have decided to submit.

CONCLUSION

While seasons of peace and rest in our Christian walk may be present, we must always be on guard. In times of peace, we must be strengthening the weapons and skills we have been given so that when the enemy attacks — either us or another Christian — we are prepared. We will be able to use the weapons we've been given skillfully, accurately, aggressively, and wisely.²

² See Luke 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- When is it easy for you to become overwhelmed, confused, or distracted in life?
- When is it easiest for you to believe you are not God's image or do not reflect His likeness?
- From what habitual sins has Jesus freed you and made you victorious?
- When is it difficult for you to be honest and vulnerable with other Christians — sharing with them your struggles of faith or that you're giving into doubt, frustration, disappointment, and discouragement?

COST

The cost of our freedom in Jesus and His victory over the enemy in our lives is the death of our habitually inclined flesh. We must continually choose to resist and reject desires that are contrary to God's design for our life. This requires us to acknowledge, seek, and thank Him regardless of the circumstance.

OUR HABITUALLY INCLINED FLESH

Ephesians 4:17-19

Our flesh, in this context, is the habitual inclination toward unnatural passions and desires. This inclination is developed over time through building habits of trusting ourselves rather than God.¹ When we choose to fulfill our natural, God-given needs and desires in unnatural ways, we develop unhealthy, destructive passions in opposition to our design.² This becomes a proclivity toward destructive mindsets and behaviors because of exponential dissatisfaction.

KILLING OUR HABITUALLY INCLINED FLESH

Luke 9:23-25

Jesus tells us that there is a process to killing our habitually inclined unhealthy, destructive passions and desires. Because our enemy continually lies to us, this process will take a lifetime. However, our heart and mind can be fully renewed by the Holy Spirit and realigned with our original design. The process of killing our habitually inclined flesh and realigning ourselves is as follows:

1. Deny Yourself

Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 2:11; 3:9

Habitually choosing to reject any temptation that is contrary to our God-given design and purpose kills these habitually inclined passions. This includes trusting that God's plan and design are the most fulfilling, life-giving, and joy-filled ways to live.

2. Take Up Your Cross

Galatians 6:2; Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Our cross is the commitment to joyfully partner with others amidst their suffering. It is a purposefully self-sacrificing effort to bring God's redemption and transformation into another person's life for their benefit.

3. Follow Jesus

Galatians 5:16, 24-25; Romans 8:3-11

Living empowered by the Holy Spirit will enable us to follow Jesus whole-heartedly without regret. He will encourage, convict, and comfort us in our submission to the Father's plan and design for our life.

¹ See Jeremiah 17:5-8; Romans 1:18-32; Jude 7; 2 Peter 2:10

² See Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 5:5-9; James 3:15-16

The process Jesus lays out for us is truly the full process of repentance. The repentance process is the only way to fully destroy our habitually inclined unhealthy and destructive passions and desires. Repentance regains the ground we've abdicated to the enemy in our minds.

1. The Father's Kindness

Romans 2:4

God initiates the process of repentance by His patience, faithfulness, and goodness.

2. The Holy Spirit's Conviction

John 16:7-11; 3:19-21; Hebrews 4:11-13

God reveals anything in our life that is keeping us from living a free, joy-filled life.

3. Jesus Makes Restitution

Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Our Heavenly Dad, through Jesus, initiates the process of reconciliation by forgiving our sins.

At this point, we must recognize the Father's earnest desire for us to be free and victorious. He initiates the process of repentance before we have even begun to acknowledge, seek, and thank Him.³ His unending, unconditional passionate love and pursuit of us desires for all people to be saved.⁴

4. We Acknowledge Our Sin

Proverbs 28:13; Acts 19:18; Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5; James 5:15

Confessing our specific mistakes, failures, and sins to God acknowledges that we take ownership of braking our relationship with Him and others.

5. We Pay Restitution

2 Corinthians 7:10-11; Exodus 22:1-15; Numbers 5:5-7

Through God's kindness, grace, and mercy we make amends, if possible to the best of our ability, toward those we have hurt, wounded, or offended.

³ See Ephesians 2:1-10; 5:2; 1 John 4:10

⁴ See John 12:30-32; Romans 5:18; 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 John 2:2

6. We Trust Jesus' Restitution

Matthew 5:24; Romans 5:10; 12:18; Ephesians 2:13-22; Colossians 1:19-23

Trusting Jesus sacrifice for our sin frees us from the shame, guilt, condemnation, and regret our sin causes.

7. We Live Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:1, 16-26; Luke 22:31-32 (esp. 22:32b); Philippians 4:8

God, through the Holy Spirit, empowers us to live free of our past sin and victorious over future temptation.

Repentance is a process of our willingness to prove our change of heart, by the renewing of our mind, through the transformation of our lifestyle over time. This process is not instantaneous nor is it a single moment. Based on 2 Corinthians 7:10-11,⁵ true repentance (new mindsets and behaviors) has several qualities:

Earnestness – *diligent, whole-hearted effort toward honesty.*

Vindication – *eagerness and deep desire to be restored.*

Indignation – *anger at sin and its effects.*

Fear – *alarm and awareness of God and temptation to sin.*

Longing – *hope and desire for reconciliation.*

Zeal – *commitment to make restitution and passion for right relational living.*

Avenging – *confidence in God's punishment for sin through Jesus.*

The byproduct of our repentance is our innocence. This innocence is based upon our trust in the fact that Jesus exchanged his righteousness for our sin. This exchange leads us to be joy-filled despite sin because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. Repentance that does not end in hope and joy is a self-focused regret believes sin is greater than Jesus sacrifice and the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

STRENGTHENING OUR SOUL

Romans 5:1-5; 12:2; James 1:2-4; John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:10; Titus 3:5

Suffering produces positives for our soul and negatives for our unhealthy and destructive habitual inclinations. These habits (addictions) and lifestyles will be attacked when we pursue freedom and victory. Suffering occurs through trials, tests, and temptations. The enemy would like us to focus on the cause of suffering rather than what it is producing.

⁵ See Galatians 5:22; Luke 15:3-7

CONCLUSION

God's goal for us is not for our happiness, comfort, circumstantial peace, or temporary gain. The Father's will for our life is to reflect Jesus — to be fully human. It is to live a life defined by joy, eternal peace, and expectant hope. Jesus has won the victory. He has set us free. It is our choice to either join him in conquering the enemy or live defeated with the enemy.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- What comfort, security, “necessity”, relationship, or “right” are you unwilling to part with for the sake of your freedom?
- To who or what do you go (physically or mentally) to minimize, distract, or ease uncomfortable or uncontrollable circumstances?
- Who is it difficult for you to serve due to their negative or destructive choices?
- For what previous sins, failures, or mistakes do you still feel shame, guilt, or regret?



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